

Message Text

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73

ACTION EA-14

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R 210100Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7175

INFO CINCPAC

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

UNCLAS WELLINGTON 2559

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CB

SUBJECT: EDITORIAL ON SIHANOUK AND HIS ALLIES

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. WELLINGTON DAILY "DOMINION" LEAD EDITORIAL SEPT 21
FOCUSSES ON SIHANOUK'S CURRENT PROBLEMS WITH PRC AND NVN.

2. ENTITLED "NEW SIGNS IN INDO-CHINA" EDITORIAL STATES:

3. QUOTE. PRINCE SIHANOUK'S CONFESSION THAT ALL
IS NOT WELL BETWEEN HIMSELF AND HIS PROTECTORS IN CHINA
AND NORTH VIETNAM INTRODUCES, IF IT IS TRUE, A NEW
AND PROMISING PERSPECTIVE ON INDO-CHINA. FOR WHAT THE
EXILED CAMBODIAN LEADER IS SAYING IS THAT NEITHER HANOI
NOR PEKING CARES SUFFICIENTLY ABOUT HIS CAUSE TO GIVE HIM
THE MILITARY BACKING HE NEEDS TO OVERTHROW THE LON NOL
REGIME IN PHNOM PENH AND RE-ESTABLISH HIS GOVERNMENT.
THIS WOULD CERTAINLY REPRESENT A STARTLING AND DRAMATIC
ABOUT FACE ON THE PART OF THE COMMUNISTS.

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4. THE PRINCE, WHO IS NOTHING IF NOT A REALIST, UNDERSTANDS THAT THE UPSHOT OF THIS DEVELOPMENT IS THAT THE REBEL KHMER ROUGE FORCES IN CAMBODIA MUST NOW ABANDON HOPES FOR AN EARLY MILITARY VICTORY. SUCH A SUCCESS HAS ALWAYS BEEN DEPENDENT UPON THE DELIVERY OF ARMS AND OTHER SUPPLIES FROM THE COMMUNISTS. LESS THAN A MONTH AGO PRINCE SIHANOUK WAS EXPECTING THESE RESOURCES TO BE TRAILED FROM CHINA, INTO NORTH VIETNAM AND FINALLY THROUGH SOUTH VIETNAM INTO CAMBODIA. IT IS ARGUABLE AS TO HOW DEPENDENT THE CAMBODIAN GUERILLAS HAVE BEEN ON NORTH VIETNAMESE REGULARS, BUT THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT COMMUNIST MATERIALS ARE ESSENTIAL TO THEIR QUICK ROUTING OF PRESIDENT LON NOL'S STRONG POINTS IN THE PRINCIPAL CITIES.

5. WHY ARE THE PRINCE'S ALLIES FORSAKING HIM? THE SHORT ANSWER HE GIVES SEEMS TO SUGGEST THAT BOTH HANOI AND PEKING HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF BATTLE. NORTH VIETNAM FEARS THAT INVOLVEMENT IN CAMBODIA WOULD AT BEST DESTROY ANY CHANCE OF PROCURING AMERICAN AID FOR REHABILITATION AND

CONSTRUCTION AND AT WORST REACTIVATE AMERICAN REPRISAL BOMBING. FURTHERMORE, PASSAGES THROUGH CAMBODIA, IT COULD BE ARGUED, ARE NO LONGER NECESSARY AS SUPPLY ROUTES TO TERRITORY NOW HELD BY THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM. AS FOR CHINA, IT SEES A NEED TO KEEP ON SIDE WITH AMERICANS, AN INVESTMENT AGAINST RUSSIAN HEGEMONY AND INFLUENCE.

6. THE ALARMS BEING CONTINUALLY SOUNDED BY THE SAIGON GOVERNMENT HARDLY LEND CREDENCE TO PRINCE SIHANOUK'S ANALYSIS. NVERTHELESS, BOTH CHINA AND NORTH VIETNAM COULD REASONABLY CONCLUDE THAT THE IMMEDIATE OVERTHROW OF PRESIDENT LON NOL IN CAMBODIA IS NO LONGER ESSENTIAL TO THEIR PURPOSE. THEY MIGHT RECKON THAT THEIR ENDS ARE BETTER SERVED BY EXPLOITING POLITICALLY THE PEACE AGREEMENTS OF A SORT WHICH NOW OPERATE BOTH IN LAOS AND SOUTH VIETNAM WITHOUT THE RISK OF UNCLASSIFIED

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COMPLICATION OF MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN CAMBODIA.

7. IF THIS PROVES TO BE THE CASE THE AMERICANS WILL FEEL FREER TO RESUME CONTACT WITH PRINCE SIHANOUK AND FACILITATE HIS RETURN TO TAKE PART IN SOME KIND OF CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. THE PRINCE'S CLAIM TO SUCH A ROLE IS SO STRONG THAT PEACE MAY NVER BE SECURE WITHOUT HIS PARTICIPATION.

END QUOTE.
VANDIVIER

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